

SATURDAY

Tried to Shift Probe To FBI, Army Says

By WILLIAM BEECHER

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WASHINGTON — High Pentagon officials say an unsuccessful attempt was made in the spring of 1969 to have the Federal Bureau of Investigation take over from Army investigators the task of looking into the prospects of riots in major American cities.

"The Army was willing to provide manpower during actual crises," one official said, "but we felt advance investigations involving civilians belonged to a civilian agency. We weren't successful in getting them to do it."

Another Defense Department source said, "The Justice Department was unable to get the FBI to be sufficiently responsive."

APPRISED of these assertions, a Justice Department spokesman declared: "As far as the Department of Justice is concerned, there have been no requests by the Army that the FBI assume its investigations of cities where riots might occur. The FBI does conduct such investigations for the Department of Justice."

The contentions that the Army was rebuffed in its effort to turn over a large part of its civil disturbance investigative work to the FBI come at a time when the Pentagon is coming under increasing fire from Congress and the news media over the extent and character of Army intelligence activities within the United States.

Recent news articles have alleged that military intelligence operatives have built up computerized data banks on suspected trouble-makers and have eavesdropped on telephone conversations in at least one instance at the 1968 Democratic national convention.

The extent of military in-

quiries into supposed radical political groups is being investigated by Sen. Sam J. Ervin Jr., D-N.C., chairman of the Senate Subcommittee on Constitutional Rights. The subcommittee plans hearings early next year.

INTERVIEWS with a number of Defense Department and Army sources disclosed that about 1,200 Army investigators were at work around the country, some of whom apparently have taken initiatives that were neither

approved nor even known to top officials in Washington.

An example of this was a crew of Army men who grew beards, painted a van with the name of a nonexistent television news company, and stationed themselves outside the main auditorium during the 1968 Democratic Convention in Chicago, and at various outdoor rallies there, to take pictures of "suspicious individuals."

Officials said a number of reforms intended to remove the Army from such activity

has been put into force. They include a prohibition of any such covert intelligence without the specific advance approval of the undersecretary of the Army.

In an appearance yesterday before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Defense Secretary Melvin R. Laird conceded that Army intelligence operations were active at the Democratic and Republican national conventions in 1968.

OTHER SOURCES said each of the three armed services provided a few hundred men on temporary duty to the Secret Service to help protect Presidential contenders.

"This followed the assassi-

nation of Bobby Kennedy," one official said, "and Congress passed a resolution that all candidates be protected. But the Secret Service didn't have nearly enough manpower."

Robert E. Jordan 3d, general counsel of the Army, said in an interview:

"I honestly believe we drifted into the area without quite realizing what we were getting into and because no one else was around to do the job."

"I'M CONVINCED that no one intended to spy on individuals or control civilian life in any way. But I also believe that some of the things begun, if expanded, sure as hell pose a real risk."

Sources said the roots of this Army involvement reach back to the Detroit riots in the summer of 1967 when Army troops were dispatched to the city to restore order.

"There were so many rumors and unsubstantiated reports that nobody really knew what was quite happening," says one official involved in that event.

In the spring of 1968, after the assassination of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Army troops were rushed to Chicago, Washington and Baltimore to put down civil disturbances and the Army was put on notice that it might have to send additional troops to Detroit, Pittsburgh and Memphis.

After that, the Army was told to prepare plans to send as many as 10,000 troops each to 25 cities simultaneously.